

Argumentative Writing

Consider using with *Voyages in English 2011*

Grade 6—Chapter 4, Lesson 6 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 7—Chapter 7, Lesson 6 or Writer’s Workshop

Grade 8—Chapter 6, Lesson 3 or Writer’s Workshop



Teach

Explain the importance of argumentative writing; tell students they will be asked to do argumentative writing as part of some tests and that these skills will help them in real ways in their lives professionally and personally. Point out that argumentative writing is used to convince the reader that a given point of view is valid and well-reasoned. It can focus on a topic (i.e., pets, sports, music) or a text (i.e., the Declaration of Independence; *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*; *The Red Pony*). The ability to compose an argument supported by evidence is an important skill. Students will be called on to use argumentative writing in high school, college, when applying for a job, and likely as part of any job they get.

Argumentative writing challenges the writer to

- be aware of and evaluate various sides of an issue or topic
- conduct research on the topic
- choose a position that is supported by facts
- present that position and the evidence that supports it
- acknowledge the existence of other positions
- use evidence to refute arguments (counterclaims) that support other positions

Practice

Ahead of time, bookmark several Web sites and gather various reference books. Explain that argumentative writing requires research. Review strategies for evaluating the reliability of a resource. As a group, create a resource reliability rubric or checklist. Evaluation criteria should include date, authority (who wrote it), and whether the source is neutral or biased? Explain that the students should use this tool to evaluate the sources they will use in their articles. Facilitate a discussion and point out that when students give their opinions about what makes a source reliable, they are engaging in argument.

Apply

Choose one of the writing prompts or let students choose. Have the students write an argumentative article using the prompt. Explain that research will be required so that the reasons they provide are supported by evidence. Brainstorm resources that students can use to get information about the specific topic.

Assess

Use the rubric on the following page to evaluate students on their understanding of argumentative writing.

Argumentative Writing (p. 2)

Potential Prompts and Writer's Workshop

Prompts

Substitute other words for the words in brackets [] to adapt the prompt to best suit your students.

Prompt

Grade 6

- Learning [another language] is important.
- It's easier to write a [poem] than to write a [paragraph].
- People have become overly dependent on [technology].
- A [longer] school [day] would make students learn more.
- [Bullying] is the biggest problem in schools today.
- [Computer games] should be used as teaching tools.

Grade 7

- [Graffiti] is an art form.
- [Football] is [not] too dangerous for young people.
- [Volunteering] makes a big difference in people's lives.
- Twenty years from now, only [electric cars] will be [on the road].
- Global climate change [is largely] caused by humans.
- [Television shows] are better today than ever before.

Grade 8

- [Worrying about the future] causes teens more stress than any other factor.
- Combining [Abraham Lincoln] and [Dwight Eisenhower] would make the perfect president.
- [Swimming] is the best form of exercise.
- [Puerto Rico] should be the 51st state.
- [Privacy] is more important than [security].
- You can learn a lot from [playing video games].

Argumentative Writing (p. 3)

Writer's Workshop

Prewriting

Explain that during the prewriting step students will plan what they are going to say. Provide the students with a graphic organizer, such as a concept web, to help them plan and organize their ideas. Lead the students in brainstorming topics or use the suggested prompts for the grade level you are teaching. Argumentative writing requires conducting research in the prewriting step. Explain to students that their topic sentence (thesis) may change if the information they learn from their research does not support their thesis. Emphasize that this is OK.

Drafting

Ask the students to review their completed graphic organizers and add any additional information or details. Tell them to begin their piece by stating the topic. Explain that in drafting, they should get their ideas down on paper in sentence form but shouldn't worry about perfect spelling or punctuation.

Content Editing

Direct the students to use the Content Editor's Checklist as they read their drafts. Consider having the students work in pairs as peer editors. Review student work in writer's conferences and provide feedback to students one-on-one. Reteach any characteristics of argumentative writing to individuals or the whole group as necessary.

Revising

Explain to students that in the revising step, they will fix any changes marked and copy the draft onto a sheet of paper or use a computer. This is the time for students to make sure that their ideas are sound and clearly stated. Students should refer to the Content Editor's Checklist again. Tell students to ask themselves: "Is my argument stronger than it was in the draft stage? Is there anything else I want to add?"

Copyediting and Proofreading

With the whole class, review the common proofreading marks shown on the inside back cover of the student and teacher editions. Direct the students to use the Copyeditor's Checklist as they read their drafts.

Publishing

Explain to students that the publishing step is when they get to share their work with an audience. Remind students that the look, or presentation, of their work will make a difference in how it is received by others. Discuss with students the many ways they can publish their work. Emphasize that when students provide feedback on any work, they should be positive and offer only constructive criticism.

Argumentative Writing (p. 4)

Checklists

Content Editor's Checklist

- Does the introduction state your position clearly and briefly state the reasons for the position? Does it catch the reader's attention?
- Does the body explain the reasons and support them with facts?
- Have you included all important details?
- Have you taken out details that are not important?
- Does your conclusion summarize your arguments and express confidence that they are convincing?

Writer's Checklist for Revising

- Does the beginning include the position statement?
- Is the evidence presented from reliable sources?
- Do you state then disprove other positions?
- Did you use a variety of sentence types?
- Is your word choice appropriate, descriptive, and precise?
- Did you include an ending that summarizes the position statement?

Copyeditor's Checklist

- Are there any run-on sentences, rambling sentences, or sentence fragments?
- Is each sentence grammatically correct?
- Is each sentence clear and logical?
- Does the length of the sentences vary?
- Are any words redundant, repeated, or misused?

Proofreader's Checklist

- Are the paragraphs indented?
- Have any words been misspelled?
- Are there errors in grammar?
- Are the capitalization and punctuation correct?
- Were new errors introduced during the editing stage?

Rubric - Argumentative Writing (p. 5)

CRITERIA	POINTS
Ideas	
a claim	
alternate or opposing claim	
Organization	
a beginning that states the claim	
a middle that gives reasons that support the claim	
a middle that states then refutes opposing claims	
an ending that supports the argument presented	
Voice	
a formal voice	
Word Choice	
transitional words and phrases	
Sentence Fluency	
a variety of sentences, including sentences with compound predicates	
Conventions	
correct grammar	
correct spelling	
correct punctuation and capitalization	
Presentation	
neatness	
consistent spacing and margins	